



News Release

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Contacts: [Julie Graham](#), Communications Office

360-236-4022

Controlled-substance prescriptions now being tracked

Information will help improve patient safety and reduce prescription abuse

OLYMPIA — State health officials are collecting information on purchases of prescription pain medication and other medicines in an effort to reduce abuse and promote safety. The Washington State Prescription Monitoring Program this month began gathering information on medications that have the potential for abuse or addiction.

“Having a patient’s prescription history gives prescribers a more complete view of patient care when they prescribe or dispense controlled substances,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky.

“This new service is another tool for patient care and safety.”

Information from pharmacies and health care providers who dispense medicine from their offices is gathered and stored in a secure, central database. Beginning in January 2012, health care providers can view the history of their patients’ prescriptions dating back to the week when the data collection began.

With this data in hand, prescribers and pharmacists will be able to intervene with their patients earlier. They can identify dangerous drug interactions, address issues of misuse, and recognize under-managed pain or the need for substance abuse treatment.

The number of people dying from prescription pain medication overdose is growing in Washington. From 2000 to 2010 the overdose death rate involving prescription pain medication more than doubled. Since 2006 deaths in our state from unintentional drug overdoses have surpassed deaths from automobile crashes.

The law allows health care providers, patients, law enforcement, and others to view the prescription records. More information on the [program and the law](#) is available online (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/PMP/public.htm>).

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